

**Punnett, Reginald Crundall, F.R.S.** *Heredity in Poultry.* Macmillan & Co. London, 1923. pp. 204. 10s.

THIS book ably fulfils the purpose for which it was written, namely to demonstrate to the poultry breeder all that the geneticist, working under the embarrassment of insufficient support with a relatively expensive material, has done with the fowl, and to prove to him that in self-interest he must take steps to ensure that fuller opportunities for further research are provided. The book is an excellent introduction to Mendelism for the poultry breeder who will find in it a clear and considered statement of the present state of knowledge of the genetics of the fowl. We believe, however, that a beginner will have greater difficulty in following the author's method of interpreting the phenomena of sex-linked inheritance than he would have encountered had the usual *Drosophila* sex-linkage scheme been adopted. Full details of Gold  $\times$  Silver and Black  $\times$  Barred crosses, by which the sex of day-old chicks can be identified, are given, and the book closes with a chapter on a subject which promises to play an important rôle in 'egg-farming,' for indications are given as to the methods by which a breeder by selecting his chicks with certain superficial characters can choose those which will exhibit that all important 'high-fecundity.' This is a most fascinating proposition: to pick out the invisible by choosing two visible characters to which it is linked.

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**Stopes, Marie, D.Sc., Ph.D.** *Contraception.* John Ball Sons & Danielson, Ltd. pp. xxiii  $\times$  417. 12s. 6d.

AN unæsthetic word, and an unæsthetic subject; but probably both have come to stay. Yet, if we may judge by her former books, æsthetics bulk large in the outlook of Dr. Stopes; she finds herself driven to sacrifice the (to her) minor æsthetic values in order to secure the greater. The book is a manual for the medical and legal professions. There are introductory notes by Professor Sir W. Bayliss and others. The first 50 pp. are taken up with a justification of "contraception"; 150 pages with descriptions of the methods; 40 with refutation of objections; and the remainder with a sketch of the history of such movements up to the present, and an explanation of the legal position on the subject in America, France and England. The descriptive portion is full and clearly written; the author's preference for one special form of method is pronounced, and (granted her premisses) appears to be justified; yet its limitations are clearly recognized. This part of the book cannot be called delightful reading, but it will convey information to those who wish to know.

The authoress is moved mainly by familial considerations, such as the necessity (economic and hygienic) of spacing births in the family, pointing out that the infantile death-rate is twice as high when the interval is only one year as when it is over two years, so that the survival rate might be greater although the birth rate were greatly lowered. And with the suitable spacing of births there are few who would quarrel, though they might disapprove of the method. This objective, however, differs widely from that aimed at by the econom-

ists who have advocated the control of conception. They want a decreased birth rate in order to stop, or at least keep within close limits, the natural increase. The two objects seem to be quite distinct; while the national and international question is touched on in this book, the familial question is uppermost.

From the national point of view, it can hardly be doubted (whatever we think of the ethics) that any general propaganda of "Contraception" is bound to be dysgenic in effect, since, however it be conducted, it is bound to reach first (as it has) the more intelligent strata of society, and to reach the lower strata very much later, if at all. This is true, even if we recognize (as I frankly do) that the authoress is trying hard to reach the lower strata. And it is still more obviously true if we take into account the lowest stratum of sub-men and sub-women, low-grades and defectives, who are quite impermeable to such advice, who always multiply exceedingly, and for whom there is no practicable remedy but segregation. It may be, indeed, that (except for morons or feeble-minded) we have a wrong conception of dysgenicity; it is always possible that the aristocratic, and still more the plutocratic, idea of "good stocks" is wrong, and that a country's welfare is best promoted by the propagation from the less highly educated classes; that "civilization is a lamp which burns at the top, but is replenished from the bottom." But this, I think, is not the view of Dr. Stopes.

When we reach her chapter on "objections," we do not find her at her best. She accuses her adversaries of lumping together all "contraceptive" measures in their condemnation; her own favourite method she considers harmless. But it is precisely the occlusive methods which they speak against, of which her own is one. I do not say that they are right in condemning occlusive methods; but they certainly have a case; the occlusion of the uterine cervix is a high-handed procedure, the harmlessness of which ought not to be taken for granted, nor can it be settled by counting noses of medical practitioners. In defence of the general system of birth control is quoted one of Havelock Ellis's less happy analogies, in which he compares these appliances with spectacles. Spectacles, however, are used to promote the visual function, not to render it inoperative. The spiritual objections, also, are not sympathetically met. It is unwise to accuse others of bias unless you are capable of realising your own bias. We are all biassed in some way, and a realisation of our own ought to make us sympathetic to that of others. I am no advocate of stereotyped morals, or stereotyped religious doctrine; yet I am not sure that the spiritual progress of the race may not before long arrive at a less favourable verdict on contraceptive methods. Infanticide is condemned now by the general sense of the community, though not always with equal severity. Abortion is illegal, though largely practiced; it is not likely ever to be legalised again. The *prima facie* utility of both, under certain circumstances, can be argued; but the feelings of the community are against them. Perhaps the feeling against birth control in general may be of the same sort, however inarticulate. And if such feelings are hereditary in any true sense, we may expect that those who possess them will

tend to possess the earth also through propagation of their kind. Dr. Stopes may say that she intends to promote moderate families of good survival value; and we are quite sure that is her intention; but I personally have been greatly impressed by the anxiety of many young men of good parts, who have dipped into her books, to find out, not how they may beget healthy children, but how they may avoid having children. And this I fear is the general trend of thought among the young adult educated populace of to-day. In view of this fact, I think it unfortunate that the authoress should explain, even with only limited approval, methods of contraception to be pursued even on the bridal night and immediately after marriage. At least in the early days the relations of bride and bridegroom should be free and untrammelled. If such methods of interference are at all to be taught to the general populace, they should be postponed until prudential considerations may reasonably arise. Except in conditions which make child-bearing undesirable, the processes of nature should be given free course, at any rate in the early period, to blossom and fructify.

Such criticisms do not imply hostility on my part. I have never spoken in public for or against birth-control in general. A manual of this nature will doubtless prove of great value; but it would have been better if written from a more detached and less propagandist standpoint. It is in good, large type; but there might have been more distinction between essentials and details; much of the latter is more suitable for small print or footnotes; there is a good deal of needless repetition, and too many and long excerpts from letters and lists of names, which tend to be wearisome.

That motherhood should be voluntary, as well as spontaneous, is a sound thesis; but the present methods are neither attractive nor as yet, I think, deserving of inclusion under scientific categories; for more satisfactory methods we must look to the future.

DOUGLAS WHITE.

Weil, Dr. A. *Sexualreform und Sexualwissenschaft*, Edited on behalf of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft. Stuttgart, Julius Püttmann, 1922. pp. 284. No price stated.

THERE are two very remarkable things about this book; its size and its contents. The volume consists of the report of lectures delivered at the first International Congress "für Sexualreform auf sexualwissenschaftlicher Grundlage," held at Berlin in (we gather) 1921.

There are 37 lectures reported, and many of the lecturers were distinguished German professors; yet the full report contains but 284 8vo. pages of normal type. We congratulate the Congress on its chairman. His name is not divulged in the report, but, whoever he was (we suspect it was Dr. Hirschfeld), he evidently ruled the Congress with a rod of iron. For most of the lectures are punctuated with plaintive appeals to the time limit; but, though many complained, often bitterly, all apparently yielded to the chairman's time schedule.

But when we turn to the subject matter of the lectures we find little cause for congratulation. There is a certain amount (of course)